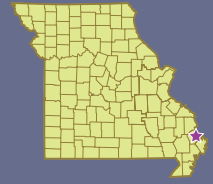


Southeast Sand Ridge Grasslands

Conservation Opportunity Area



Mississippi River
Alluvial Basin



Dune and swale topography, scattered sand blows, and dissecting cypress sloughs are characteristic landscape features of the sand prairie remnants of the Blodgett Terrace.

Missouri Department of Conservation

Sand prairies are the rarest natural community in southeast Missouri and certainly one of the rarest statewide. When the Corp of Discovery landed on the “Spanish-side” after rounding the tip of Illinois-country they sent hunters inland into what is now Southeast Missouri. They returned with Greater prairie chickens. Today barely a glimmer of that past grandeur remains.

Walter Schroeder made a conservative estimate of 60 square miles of presettlement grassland in historic Southeast Missouri. Perhaps sand dominated communities were more extensive, since many of the sand ridges had been settled or had grown into scrubby sand woodland due to fire suppression by the time the surveyors drew their plat maps of the region.

Presently less than 2,000 acres of medium to high quality sand prairies and savannas remain in Southeast Missouri. Today, all of the sand community acreage has

been altered or domesticated for agricultural purposes.

The development of extensive modern agricultural systems, urbanization, and the advent of center pivot irrigation have all led to the virtual elimination of sand community types that once occupied the sand ridges near Sikeston, Blodgett, and East Prairie, and the vast sandy Malden Plain. Only a small fraction of these habitats remain, still supporting various plants and animals native to these grasslands. Sand prairie remnants and conservation lands currently support populations of rare plants such as snoutbean, sand hickory, Hall’s bulrush, and jointweed.

Many animals also occupy sand communities such as Dusty hognosed snakes, Illinois chorus frogs, Bobwhite quail, Eastern meadowlarks, Northern harriers, and other grassland birds; native bees, sand cicadas, and insects that we have just begun to learn about.

Southeastern Sand Ridge Grasslands Conservation Strategies

- Permanently conserve remnants and restorations through permanent land conservation tools (easement, acquisition, or other special practices).
- Establish private landowner partners and maintain existing landowner relations.
- Promote the exchange of information through private landowner assistance, outreach and education efforts, and Cape Girardeau Conservation Campus Nature Center programming.
- Maintain efforts to control invasive plants and animals.
- Develop diverse sand community restorations including sand blows, sand dune and swale communities, and sand woodlands and savannas.
- Continue with seed collection, propagation, and restoration initiatives.
- Construct swales for amphibian breeding sites and declining plant species.
- Continue monitoring populations of Species of Conservation Concern.



Missouri Department of Conservation

Jointweed is a rare shrub that can be found in southeastern Missouri's sand grasslands.

Priority Research and Inventory Needs

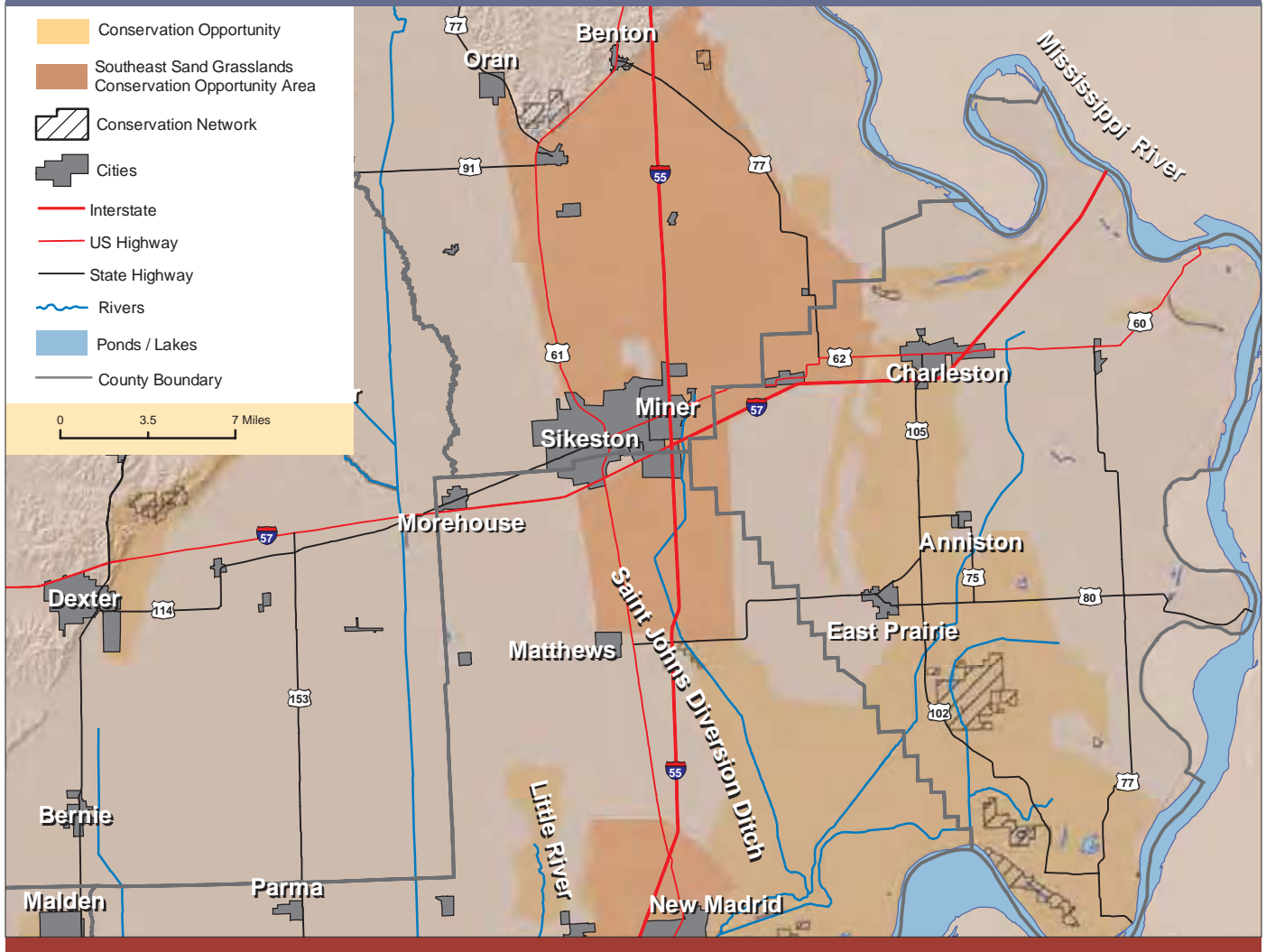
- Determine most effective methods for establishing populations of rare plant species on conservation lands
- Conduct surveys for declining amphibians and reptiles
- Expand grassland bird surveys and monitoring programs
- Monitor remnant populations of state listed sand prairie plants
- Conduct entomological surveys on conservation network lands
- Investigate and identify additional sand prairie remnants

Conservation Partners

Existing: Southeast Missouri State University (SEMO); Eastern Illinois University (EIU); Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville (SIUE); Missouri Botanical Garden (MoBOT); US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS); Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR); Charleston Baptist Association; Cape Girardeau Conservation Campus Nature Center; Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC)

Potential: Audubon Missouri; Missouri Prairie Foundation (MPF); The Nature Conservancy – Missouri Chapter (TNC); Quail Unlimited (QU); Quail Forever (QF); Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation (MCHF); Ducks Unlimited (DU); National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf)

Southeastern Sand Ridge Conservation Opportunity Area



Funding Sources

Existing: NRCS State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement program, SEMO annual budget; MDC Wildlife Diversity Funds; NRCS Wetland Reserve Program; MDC annual budget

Promising Future Sources: NWTF Wild Turkey Superfund; USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife program; Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative Grants; NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program, NRCS Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, MDC Landowner Incentives Program

Eastern spadefoots breed in temporarily flooded sandy swales, ditches, and ephemeral wetlands in agricultural fields. Eastern spadefoots and Illinois chorus frogs are both fossorial species, spending a significant portion of their lives buried in the sand, awaiting a heavy spring rain.

Existing Conservation Network

Charleston Baptist Association Camp, Sand Prairie Conservation Area, Southeast Missouri State – Oran Farm

Jeff Briggler



Sand Prairie Grasslands



Missouri Department of Conservation

Private landowners are very important to the recovery of sand prairie. Partnerships have formed to promote the conservation of sand prairies through cooperative habitat management, land-owner technical support, and programs tailored to recover Species of Conservation Concern.

Conservation Challenges

Threats to the Southeast Sand Ridge Grasslands include the inability to secure remnants for restoration through land acquisition, and the lack of significant remnants or restorations that express the uniqueness of this suite of natural communities. The development of future conservation partnerships, maintenance of present relations, and the ability to

effectively provide private land incentive programs are essential for conservation momentum and will allow us to conserve remaining populations of Species of Conservation Concern. Continued development of educational programs, outreach efforts, and volunteer involvement will instill more interest in this unusual landscape.

To learn more about the Southeastern Sand Ridge Conservation Opportunity Area, please contact:



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